nectac

Technical Assistance Model
for Long-Term Systems Change

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The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)

is a program of the

FPG Child Development Institute

of

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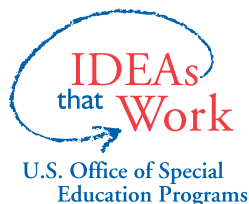
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June 2009

BACKGROUND

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) was charged by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) from October, 2001 through September, 2006 to develop, implement, and evaluate an approach to technical assistance that would result in sustainable systems change in state Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs served under the early childhood provisions of IDEA.

After five years of developing and implementing the TA Model for Long-Term System Change, NECTAC analyzed evaluation data in an attempt to validate the model and gain a greater understanding of the variables influencing the effectiveness of the TA Model in accomplishing change in states.

During this period, nine plans were completed and another forty-nine plans were under development or being implemented. For the nine plans that were fully implemented, 100% of plans showed improved state systems. Additionally, evidence of improved local system infrastructure and improved practices for service providers was seen in 67% of plans. Beyond that, 44% of plans showed improved results for children and families.

Even with the individualized nature of the systems change work with states, and with the variation across plans on a number of dimensions, NECTAC was able to determine the most effective strategies relating to the development and implementation processes for producing better results. The most important lessons learned are incorporated into the description of the model in this paper and can be applied to future technical assistance with states on system change initiatives.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The NECTAC TA Model for Long-Term Systems Change acknowledges and is grounded in conceptual frameworks found in the literature on systems change and systems thinking. The NECTAC conceptual framework employs a simplified theory of change and was developed specifically for states' infant and toddler early intervention programs and preschool special education service systems, designed to benefit young children with disabilities, from birth through age 5, and their families.

NECTAC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
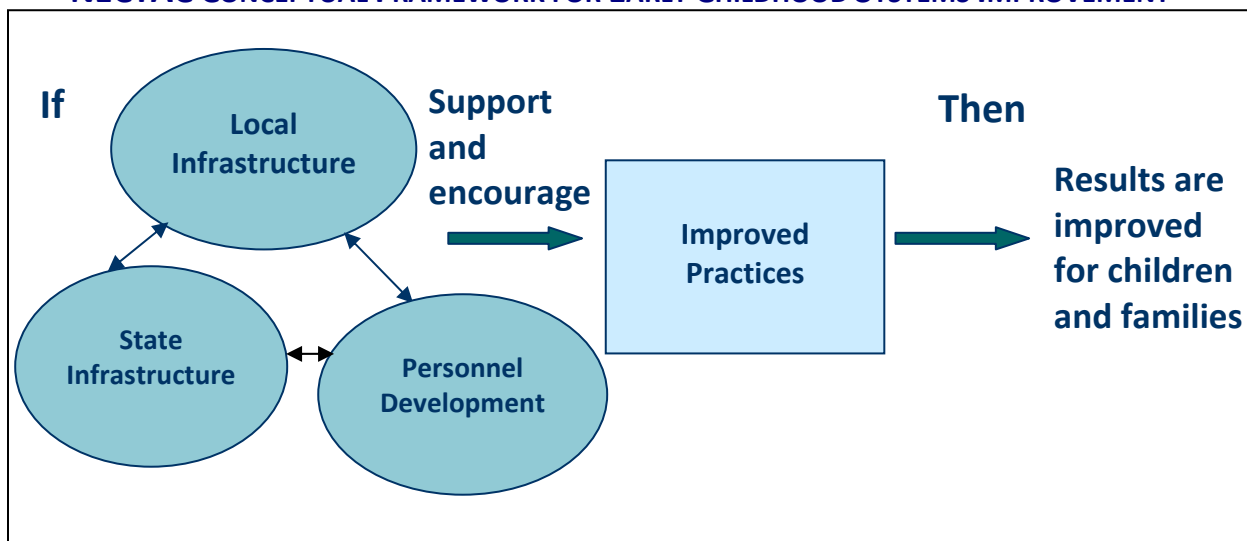
The underlying logic of the model is that for results to improve for children and families, practice needs to be research-based, of high quality and appropriate for the individual child. For such provider practices to occur, the local infrastructure must encourage and support implementation of those practices; a system of personnel development must be in place and designed to teach those practices to new and current practitioners; and the state infrastructure needs policies to require and guide implementation of those practices and a quality assurance system to ensure that practices are benefiting children and families. Because these components of a state system are interrelated, a change in one component is not likely to be sustained unless accompanied by supportive changes in all related components.

MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

In accordance with the conceptual framework, the NECTAC TA Model defines the levels of service systems for potential targets and impacts of change. Inclusion of stakeholders at these various system levels, an important characteristic of the NECTAC Model, ensures broad input into the development of the state plans.

☐ **State Infrastructure**: Administrative structures, policies, procedures and guidance, funding, and interagency collaboration at the state level

Stakeholders at this level include Part C coordinators, Part C agency heads, Section 619 coordinators, directors of special education, state interagency coordinating council members, including parents, and other state officials.

☐ **Personnel Development**: Higher education and a state's capacity for training and technical assistance (TA) across the state

Stakeholders at this level include state TA and training staff, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) coordinators and staff, SIG coordinators and staff, representatives from higher education, researchers, and others who have a role in educating and supporting service personnel.

☐ **Community/Local Infrastructure**: Administrative structures between the state and practice levels (regional, local, community catchment areas, agencies and programs), policies, procedures and guidance, funding, and supervision and collaboration at the community and local agency level

Stakeholders at this level include regional and local program and agency administrators, and local interagency coordinating council members.

☐ **Service Provider/Practice**: Providers' values, knowledge, skills and practices

Stakeholders at this level include early interventionists, early childhood special educators, preschool teachers, child care providers, Head Start teachers, related service providers/therapists, service coordinators, and other providers.

☐ **Children/Families**: What children and families value, know, feel and are able to do as a result of the change

Stakeholders at this level include parents, family members, and representatives from parent organizations.

NECTAC found that the participation of stakeholders at all of these levels made the most important difference in understanding the nature of the state's challenges and in defining a vision of the solution that reflected the key perspectives relevant in each state. Although not statistically significant, states with more varied or representative stakeholders involved in the development of the plan had slightly more successful results.

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NECTAC TA MODEL

The NECTAC approach incorporates many of the critical characteristics of successful systems change suggested by the literature:

- ☐ Involving stakeholders who represent all levels of the system and the various diverse populations of the state

- ☐ Garnering the commitment and support of state leadership to the plan's goals

- ☐ Creating a common understanding across the multiple perspectives of issues at all system levels and the precipitating problems that drive the state need for change

- ☐ Creating a shared "vision of the solution" for how participants want the system to look and work after the change effort, which includes specifying desired impacts at all levels of the system

- ☐ Using a logic model for planning a sequence of change strategies or activities that cumulatively would achieve the desired multi-level outcomes

- ☐ Assembling a TA team with an appropriate mix of expertise *(See page 10)*

- ☐ Working collaboratively with other TA agencies/organizations to leverage/pool resources for assisting in the implementation of change activities

- ☐ Ongoing and cyclical evaluation and monitoring of the accomplishment of benchmarks identified for activities in the states' plans, to allow mid-course corrections and fine-tuning of the plans

- ☐ Evaluating the effectiveness of the plan in making the intended improvements at the state, services, and family and child levels

NECTAC found that state leadership with a commitment to the plan's goals and with time to coordinate and oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of the state plan is critical to the state's success in following through with the plan. Over the course of the contract, we learned the importance of initially approaching state-level staff who had the authority to make decisions about engaging in the state plan process and to garner the support of other influential stakeholders, such as state directors of special education and Part C lead agency heads right from the beginning. Having the commitment of key state leaders up front expedited the process and helped to ensure that appropriate stakeholders were involved.

COMPONENTS OF THE STATE PLANS FOR LONG-TERM SYSTEMS CHANGE

Although each state plan for long-term system change is individualized for the state's specific issues, challenges, resources, and context, there are standard components in all the fully developed state plans. The standard components of a State Plan for Long-Term Systems Change are shown below.

☐ **Issue Area**: A key issue area for the state plan is identified. Selecting and clarifying the issue and gathering other relevant contextual information is accomplished through review of state documents, stakeholder query, series of conference calls, and/or on-site meetings *(See Attachment 1, page 17, for an example).*

☐ **Challenge Statement:** A challenge statement is articulated which succinctly states the problem to be addressed and captures the core elements of what must change in order for the plan to be successful *(See Attachment 1, page 17, for an example).*

☐ **Desired Result:** Each plan outlines a desired result, which is a statement of the intended benefits from implementing the plan for children and families. It is the ultimate outcome or "bottom line" that is evaluated. The desired result corresponds to the challenge statement, articulating what would be achieved *(See Attachment 1, page 17, for an example).*

☐ **Multi-Level Issue Statements:** The multi-level issue statements are a concise summary of the issues and/or challenges at each system level *(See Attachment 1, page 17, for an example).* These statements reflect multiple perspectives and serve several purposes:
   o   Provide a structure to organize issues and stimulate discussion with a state
   o   Provide common language and understanding among stakeholders in the state and TA providers of the scope and focus of continued work together
   o   Stimulate thinking about relationships among the system levels
   o   Stimulate thinking about outcomes at the different levels
   o   Can be used as a baseline of state status before the plan is implemented.

☐ **Multi-Level Impact Statements:** The multi-level impact statements describe the desired outcomes or improvements that stakeholders would "like to see happen" at each level of the system. These intended outcomes directly correspond to the issue statements for each level. Generating and discussing outcomes across system levels has several benefits. Taken together, they clarify the bounds of the change effort and how far the state is interested or willing to go to address the issues/challenges. They are also useful to refer to when developing the benchmarks for an activity *(See Attachment 1, page 17, for an example).*

☐ **Improvement Activities/Strategies:** These are specific strategies or activities that are substantial enough to lead stakeholders from "where they are" to "where they want to be." A single strategy usually consists of many steps to accomplish its benchmarks and allow progression to the next strategy when it is completed. Other considerations include:
   o   A single strategy can address multiple levels and multiple outcomes.
   o   Together, the combination of strategies addresses all of the multi-level outcome statements.

o   The combination of strategies, taken together, leads to the desired results for children and families.
o   Generally, strategies build on one another, implying a necessary sequence for the strategies.

☐ **Visual Depiction:** The plan's development process produces a visual depiction, or "blueprint," which shows a sequential, logical flow of planned activities and the interrelationships that lead to the desired outcomes at all levels of the system. The combinations of planned activities are developed to be feasible, given available resources, in order to achieve the desired multi-level outcomes. The activities are displayed according to where they fit in a timeline and at the level that is affected. The visual depiction serves as a useful communication tool when it is coherent, sound and clear enough to convey the intent of the systems change effort *(See Attachment 2, page 19, for an example)*.

Visual Depiction Format
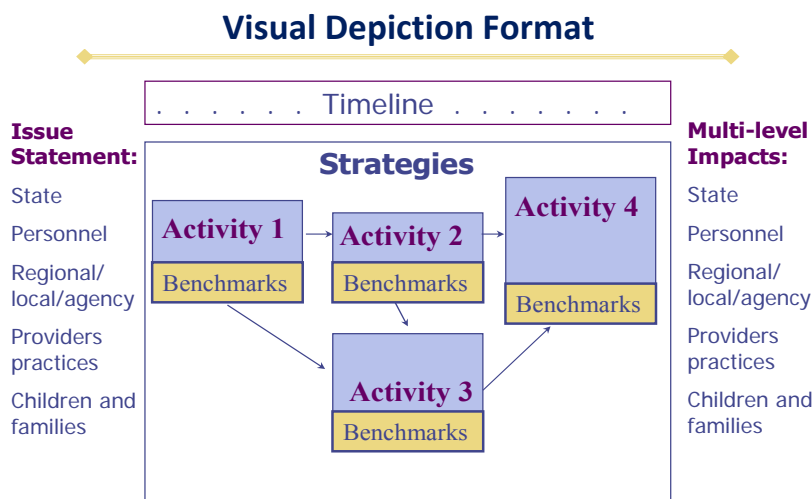
☐ **Activity Description:** Each activity on the visual depiction has a corresponding activity description, which includes a succinct statement of what the activity is intended to accomplish and how it fits with and contributes to other Activities/Strategies of the systems change effort. The activity description provides details of each change strategy, such as who will be involved as the primary planners or implementer(s), who will provide TA/consultation, the sequence of key steps, timelines, which levels of the system are targeted as beneficiaries of the activity, benchmarks, and data sources to measure accomplishments.

This part of the written plan is a living document; details are added or activities revised as is necessary throughout implementation *(See Attachment 3, page 21, for an example)*.

☐ **Benchmarks and Data Sources:** Benchmark(s) are developed and evaluated in order to determine whether the activity/strategy is successfully completed, thus giving the state the ability to continue with subsequent activities. These are included as part of the Activity Description *(See Attachment 3, page 21, for an example)*.

PROCESS STEPS FOR TA MODEL

The process of using the NECTAC TA Model entails multiple interactions over time between TA staff and clients for various purposes. The purposes of these interactions can be considered "steps" in the process of implementing the TA Model.

☐ **Engaging**: Introducing and/or explaining the NECTAC TA Model

☐ **Selecting the Issue**: Determining, with a state, a priority area for state planning

☐ **Clarifying the Issue**: Developing, with a state, an in-depth understanding of the needs, resources, and manifestations of the selected issue across the system levels in a state

☐ **Planning the Development Process**: Determining the participants, schedule, process strategies and agenda for the development of a state's plan for system change

☐ **Providing TA to Help Develop the State Plan for System Change**: Providing technical assistance in a plan's identified issue area in order to help determine the nature of activities to include in the plan

☐ **Developing and Refining the State Plan**: Determining desired results, activities, benchmarks, timelines, and contacts for a state plan

☐ **Quality Review**: Reviewing a draft state plan to ensure logic, practicality, evaluability, and overall quality of the plan. The review process is conducted by a NECTAC review team according to *Criteria for Quality State Plans for System Change (See page 11)*, a document that outlines six quality criteria for state plans for system change.

☐ **Planning Implementation of State Plan Activities**: Determining the specific steps, timelines, and participants for implementing each activity of a state's plan based on the intended purpose(s) and audience. This often includes developing a process agenda and resource materials, identifying appropriate participants, planning for the participation of TA partners, etc.

☐ **Tracking and Promoting State Plan Implementation**: Monitoring the implementation of the activities on a state's plan and maintaining communication with one or more state contacts to encourage continued attention to the plan

☐ **Reviewing/Verifying Evaluation Data**: Reviewing data to determine the extent to which benchmarks for an activity are met

☐ **Making Significant Revisions in a State Plan**: Modifying planned activities or adding new activities when necessary to accomplish the intended multi-level impacts of a plan

☐ **Providing TA in State Work Plan Issue Area**: Providing technical assistance in the issue area to support the implementation of an activity on a plan

EVALUATION OF THE TA MODEL

PROCESS EVALUATION METHODS

During the 5-year period of testing the Take care, model, feedback was collected on the *processes* of developing and implementing the TA model to provide information to improve the efficiency and user acceptance of the approach. Key data collection methods included:

- ☐ **External evaluation** of the implementation of the TA Model, using multiple data collection methods, including questionnaires, telephone interviews, and a client focus group
- ☐ **Case studies** conducted by an external evaluator.

Analysis and review of the evaluation data led to recommendations related to the process variables, e.g., increasing flexibility, designing templates for similar issues faced by multiple states.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION METHODS

Analysis of the *results* of state plans was based on a selected set of 37 plans which were active or completed at the time of data collection. Data collection to evaluate the results of the state change efforts included:

- ☐ **External evaluation** on the implementation of state plans for system change using multiple data collection methods, including questionnaires, telephone interviews, and a client focus group

- ☐ **Case studies** of the impact of the implementation of state plans, conducted by an external evaluator

- ☐ **Effectiveness data** collected from TA staff to allow an examination of the relationship among characteristics of various state plans and the states' accomplishment of improved systems, services, and positive results for children and families

Evaluators conducted surveys and interviews to collect data on the results of the plans, and the reported results were, whenever possible, substantiated by materials/products, state annual reports and other monitoring and program evaluation data. Analysis showed that the development and implementation of long-term system change plans had impacts on state and local systems of services, the practices of teachers and direct service providers, and results for children and families.

For any TA provider undertaking this type of systems change effort with a state, a combination of evaluation methods is recommended to monitor progress and determine whether the TA is making a difference.

DETERMINING STATE READINESS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE TA

NECTAC found several considerations important in determining whether a state would be likely to engage in and follow through with a system change planning initiative. First, the focus and breadth of the issue needs to be suitable for a long-term intensive change effort. Second, the state must be poised to support and undertake such an effort. And last, the TA Center must assign TA personnel with appropriate expertise and allocate the resources required.

Is the challenge the state wants to address amenable to a systems change process?

☐ **Appropriate**: The nature of the issue is such that strategic planning for systems change would be likely to improve the state's capacity to manage or resolve the issue.

☐ **Significant**: Addressing the issue will make a worthwhile difference, especially for improving results for children and families.

☐ **Timely**: There is some degree of urgency and there may be consequences for not addressing the issue soon.

☐ **Doable**: The focus of the plan is defined and circumscribed well enough to be feasible to address in 1–3 years.

Are the following factors in place which are indicators of potential success and can be used as criteria for selection?

☐ **Commitment**: Key leaders in the state support efforts to address the issue in terms of values and resources, and have clear expectations and commitment to the change process utilizing TA.

☐ **Readiness**: The state Part C and/or Section 619 agencies and other key stakeholders are able to devote the necessary time and other resources, including financial, to the development and implementation of the systems change plan.

☐ **Coordination**: Activities already planned by the state will be enhanced and more effective if conducted within the context of a multi-level plan for systems change. Development of the new systems change plan will not duplicate existing plans or activities but will tie them together to improve results.

☐ **Involvement**: Key stakeholders' perspectives and involvement are necessary to interpret the issue, its scope, significance, and urgency and to ensure that the changes being made are sustainable.

☐ **Experience**: The state has already had experience with the systems change TA Model process and has used it to address issues and make change.

Do TA providers have the following mix of expertise to successfully undertake the range of responsibilities to collaboratively develop a plan and to promote and support its implementation?

☐ **Context Knowledge**: An understanding of the state context, including political climate, economic realities, past and current initiatives, key players and relationships in the state

☐ **Planning Expertise**: Ability to guide the state systems change process to develop a logical, sound plan that adequately and efficiently addresses the state's needs, including monitoring implementation and attainment of desired outcomes

☐ **Process Expertise**: Ability to plan, coordinate, conduct and facilitate stakeholder meetings and conference calls and to employ technology appropriately

☐ **Topical Expertise**: Knowledge of relevant content, the ability to interpret the state's issues to provide information or technical assistance to support plan activities, and ability to use information about research, resources, effective practices, projects and initiatives pertinent to the identified issue

Can the TA organization allocate adequate resources?

☐ **Adequate Resources**: Willingness to allocate sufficient resources to support a team of TA providers who are able to devote the necessary time to work with the state, who collectively have the right mix of expertise, and who have logistical support (administrative, technology, travel)

☐ **Collaboration**: Receptivity and readiness to collaborate with other TA organizations, research centers and existing state initiatives to add to expertise for developing and implementing the state plans and to extend and coordinate resources for maximum benefit to the state

QUALITY REVIEW OF THE LONG-TERM SYSTEMS CHANGE PLANS

NECTAC found that internal reviews of both an early draft and the final draft documents were extremely helpful in improving the quality of the state plans for system change. The reviews were guided by key criteria for evaluating state plans by review teams that included a topic specialist, an evaluator, staff with knowledge of TA Partner resources, and staff with expertise in systems change. The process includes review of:

☐ **Technical completeness**: Does the plan include timeline, dates, and individual responsibilities?

☐ **Benchmarks**: Do they appropriately reflect for each activity what must be accomplished for the activity to be successful? Is the proposed evaluation evidence of the accomplishment of benchmarks and impacts realistic and credible?

☐ **Combination of activities**: Would the activities in the plan, if successfully completed, reasonably be expected to lead to the intended impacts at all system levels, including benefits for children and families?

☐ **Timelines**: Are they realistic, and do they suggest that the plan is feasible, given the time and resources?

☐ **Plan components**: Do they reflect perspectives of stakeholders from multiple levels of the state system, including families and practitioners?

☐ **Partners' TA resources**: Are they are appropriately included as TA providers in the plan?

DEVELOPING PLANS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

A state system change plan is most likely to continue and have long-term results if the plan *development* process is led more by TA staff than state leadership, as long as TA staff does not completely control the development of the plan.

Although each long-term systems change plan is individualized for the participating states, over time the plans in particular issue areas showed similarities in patterns of activities/strategies and intended outcomes. To improve efficiency in developing plans with states in those issue areas (e.g., early childhood transition, early childhood outcome systems, preschool inclusion), NECTAC developed templates for plans in these areas that captured the basic elements of the plans. The templates provide TA staff and clients a means of thinking about the breadth of potential change strategies and streamline the development process. The templates are adapted for each state to reflect each state's unique needs and specific change strategies.

Among the most important lessons learned about the development of plans for systems change are:

☐ Develop clear expectations for systems change and improvements with the state stakeholders before engaging in the process.

☐ Include leadership, or gain the support and commitment of the relevant leaders in the state, before undertaking in the development process.

☐ Include stakeholders from different roles (state, local, administrative, provider, and family) in the development process.

☐ Ensure that the focus of the plan is an issue that the state is willing and able to devote resources to address.

☐ Take more of a lead on the plan development but not to the extent where the plan is "owned" by the TA team.

☐ Allow for a sufficient amount of time for the state to be actively engaged with the TA team to develop the plan.

IMPLEMENTING PLANS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The implementation process includes all aspects of carrying out the plans. Leadership in implementing the plans should be shared between the state and TA team.

Factors that contribute to the likelihood that a state will continue to address the identified issues, carry out activities in the plan, and achieve higher results include:

☐ Developing the plan sufficiently before beginning implementation

☐ Consistently using or referring to and updating the written plan to guide implementation

☐ Flexibility and on-going TA to support the plan's goals and activities

☐ State receiving sufficient amount of technical assistance and/or interaction time with TA provider(s) while implementing the plan

☐ Tracking by TA staff and routine communication

Technical assistance during the implementation of plans may include:

☐ Providing significant consultation

☐ Research

☐ Problem-solving

☐ Providing information resources

☐ Reviewing/critiquing state outputs/products

☐ Facilitating state work group meetings

☐ Conducting an evaluation of a plan activity

☐ Tracking and promoting ongoing implementation of the strategic plan

☐ Routine communication between the TA team and the state contacts in order to monitor the state's progress on the plan as activities occur and are evaluated

STATE SYSTEMS

Activities at the state system level are typically designed to strengthen state policies, procedures, and guidance. Impacts at the state level may include:

☐ Creation or improvement of mission and values statements

☐ Creation or improvement of state policies and guidance documents

☐ Creation of new or revised memorandums of agreement across agencies to facilitate joint efforts in the state and create a seamless system of services

☐ Creation or improvement of systems for monitoring local programs

☐ Creation or refinement of data systems to ensure the state has accurate information for decision-making

☐ Creation of new or improved programs for tracking and monitoring children who are not eligible but are at risk for needing services

☐ Identification of additional funding sources for services

☐ Creation or revision of training and TA plans and materials

☐ Revision of curriculum in higher education programs

☐ Revision or updates to licensure requirements

LOCAL SYSTEMS

Activities at the local system infrastructure level are designed to strengthen local support/operations, guidance, policies, procedures and coordination of services. Activities at this level may involve conducting pilot programs or providing training on new policies, practices, assessments and data collection systems. Examples of impacts of system change plans on local administration and infrastructure include:

☐ Creation of local committees and/or local interagency agreements that support collaboration by clarifying roles and responsibilities across various programs

☐ Changes in local system policy and procedures in order to streamline operations (e.g., eligibility determination and assessment practices)

☐ Restructuring of programs and/or creation of new community programs to increase the number of inclusive settings in which to provide services

☐ Improved support to professional staff to take advantage of educational opportunities (e.g., training on evidence-based practices)

☐ Increased use of data reporting mechanisms to inform improved practices

PROVIDER PRACTICES

Positive changes at the practitioner level are the increased knowledge and skills of providers and teachers, along with changed attitudes, resulting in improved early intervention and preschool practices. Improved practices often have clear connections to related activities in the state system change plan, such as formulating new guidelines and developing training, and providing practitioners with the knowledge and skills they need to subsequently change practices. Examples of changes in provider practice include:

- ☐ Greater understanding of IDEA and best practices (e.g., smooth transition processes)

- ☐ Increased ability to inform parents of the variety of resources and services available to them

- ☐ Greater understanding of the collection and use of child outcome data, the monitoring and self-assessment process, and the practitioners' roles

- ☐ More effective interactions with families to collaboratively understand their child's development, signs of delay, and family priorities

- ☐ Improved and increased provision of services in natural environments with routines-based approaches

- ☐ Increased ability of family members to support their children's development

- ☐ Implementation of new guidelines and/or tools (e.g., for screening, assessment or evaluation)

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Many of improved results for children and families have a clear connection to improved practices of teachers and providers. Impacts for families and children may include:

- ☐ Appropriate services and supports received in a timely manner

- ☐ Increased number of services and supports provided in natural environments that fit family-identified routines/activities

- ☐ Increased participation and engagement of young children with disabilities in activities in community settings

- ☐ Improved family capacity to develop plans with professionals appropriate to the needs of their child

- ☐ Increased understanding by family members of child development in order to help them monitor their child's progress

- ☐ Improved child outcomes relating to social relationships, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

EXAMPLE OF FOUNDATIONAL COMPONENTS OF A STATE SYSTEMS CHANGE PLAN

Issue Area: Evaluation and Assessment of children Birth to Age 5

Challenge Statement: Practices regarding evaluation and assessment and also determination of eligibility of children birth through five are inconsistent across regions and do not necessarily reflect best practice in early childhood evaluation and assessment.

Desired Result: Children birth to five and their families across the state will benefit from consistent and timely evaluation and assessment practices which support appropriate eligibility decisions and selection of needed supports, services and community resources.

Multi-Level Issue and Impact Statements:

System Level	Multi-Level Issue Statements	Multi-Level Impact Statements
State level infrastructure	The state hasn't provided enough guidance and support for a coordinated, efficient evaluation and assessment system and doesn't have adequate data to know if processes are timely and being implemented consistently across the state.	The state provides consistent guidance and uses data about evaluation/ assessment and eligibility to inform state decisions.
Personnel Development	There are insufficient personnel available to meet the increasing number of children being served. Staff are not adequately qualified and don't have ready access to support and materials to develop needed skills for including children with disabilities.	The state TA system uses state guidance to inform and provide ongoing training and TA to the field on quality evaluation/ assessment/eligibility practices and on streamlined procedures to help address personnel shortages.
Community/ local level infrastructure	Programs are having difficulty complying with the 45-day timeline, are overloaded with paperwork and are interpreting eligibility requirements differently across regions.	Regional administrators support service providers to implement state guidelines for consistent and timely use of evaluation/ assessment and eligibility methods.
Practitioners and practices	Practitioners are asking for more direction because they don't have adequate knowledge about selecting appropriate evaluation and assessment tools, lack confidence in administering them, and are not making use of all available information to make informed eligibility and programming decisions.	All service providers conduct quality evaluations and assessments to determine eligibility for children (B-5) according to state guidelines in a consistent and equitable way, and develop individualized plans to achieve desired results for children.
Children and families	Parents are expected to have their children assessed and evaluated multiple times in an uncoordinated way and are overwhelmed with making sense out of information about their children provided to them from multiple people.	Families understand the reasons for and implications of having their child evaluated and assessed, and take an active part in the process.

NECTAC Technical Assistance Model for Long-Term Systems Change

ATTACHMENT 2

EXAMPLE OF A VISUAL DEPICTION OF A STATE SYSTEMS CHANGE PLAN

Issue Area: *Evaluation and Assessment*

Challenge: Practices regarding evaluation and assessment and determination of eligibility of children birth through five are inconsistent across regions and do not necessarily reflect research and evidence-based practices or meet compliance with provisions of IDEA.
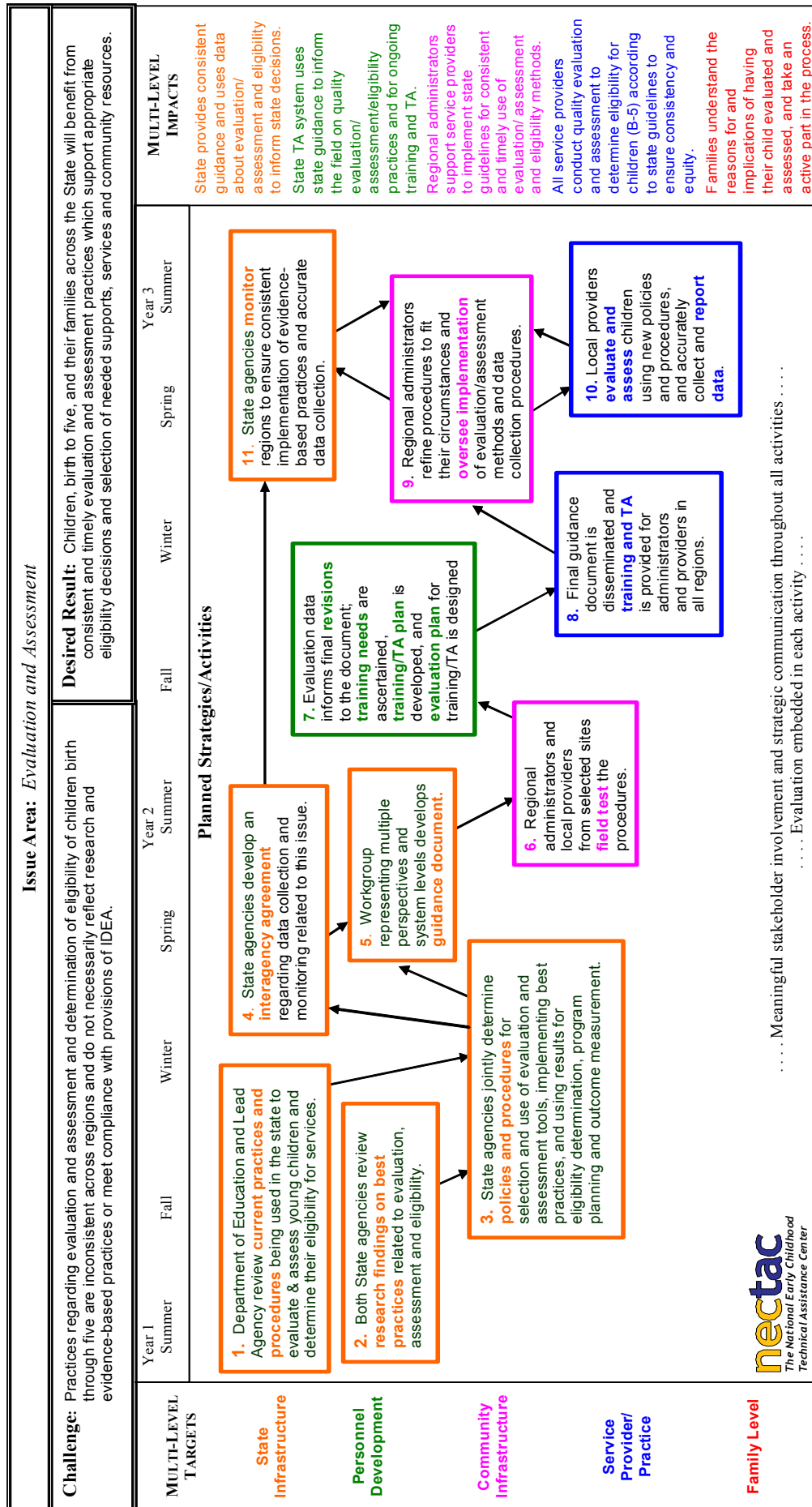
Desired Result: Children, birth to five, and their families across the State will benefit from consistent and timely evaluation and assessment practices which support appropriate eligibility decisions and selection of needed supports, services and community resources.

Planned Strategies/Activities

MULTI-LEVEL TARGETS	Year 1 Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Year 2 Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Year 3 Summer	MULTI-LEVEL IMPACTS

State Infrastructure

1. Department of Education and Lead Agency review **current practices and procedures** being used in the state to evaluate & assess young children and determine their eligibility for services.

4. State agencies develop an **interagency agreement** regarding data collection and monitoring related to this issue.

11. State agencies **monitor** regions to ensure consistent implementation of evidence-based practices and accurate data collection.

Personnel Development

2. Both State agencies review **research findings on best practices** related to evaluation, assessment and eligibility.

7. Evaluation data informs final **revisions** to the document; **training needs** are ascertained, **training/TA plan** is developed, and **evaluation plan** for training/TA is designed

Community Infrastructure

5. Workgroup representing multiple perspectives and system levels develops **guidance document.**

9. Regional administrators refine procedures to fit their circumstances and **oversee implementation** of evaluation/assessment methods and data collection procedures.

Service Provider/ Practice

3. State agencies jointly determine **policies and procedures** for selection and use of evaluation and assessment tools, implementing best practices, and using results for eligibility determination, program planning and outcome measurement.

6. Regional administrators and local providers from selected sites **field test** the procedures.

8. Final guidance document is disseminated and **training and TA** is provided for administrators and providers in all regions.

10. Local providers **evaluate and assess** children using new policies and procedures, and accurately collect and **report data.**

Family Level

. . . . Meaningful stakeholder involvement and strategic communication throughout all activities . . . . .
. . . . Evaluation embedded in each activity . . . . .

MULTI-LEVEL IMPACTS:

State provides consistent guidance and uses data about evaluation/ assessment and eligibility to inform state decisions.

State TA system uses state guidance to inform the field on quality evaluation/ assessment/eligibility practices and for ongoing training and TA.

Regional administrators support service providers to implement state guidelines for consistent and timely use of evaluation/ assessment and eligibility methods.

All service providers conduct quality evaluation and assessment to determine eligibility for children (B-5) according to state guidelines to ensure consistency and equity.

Families understand the reasons for and implications of having their child evaluated and assessed, and take an active part in the process.

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ATTACHMENT 3

EXAMPLE OF AN ACTIVITY/STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

Activity 3: Determine Policies and Procedures

Activity Coordinator: _____	TA Provider(s): _____

Activity Description: State Department of Education and Lead Agency jointly determine policies and procedures for selection and use of evaluation and assessment tools, implementing evidence-based practices, and using results for eligibility determination, program planning and outcome measurement.

This activity includes recommendations for potential policy changes and guidance based on findings from Activity 1 (current practices) and Activity 2 (review of research) and will have an impact on development of the interagency agreement (Activity 4), the content for the guidance document being developed (Activity 5) and plans for field testing (Activity 6). Clear expectations from the Department of Education and Lead Agency should ensure that regional and local practices are consistent and in compliance, and that children receive timely and appropriate evaluations for eligibility determination and IFSP/IEP development.

Steps to accomplish this activity:
- Workgroup summarizes information about research findings on effective practices gleaned from the meeting(s) with national consultants.
- After looking at information on current practices and compliance status with broad stakeholder input, workgroup makes suggestions for policy clarifications or changes.
- Workgroup presents suggestions for new policy/procedures to two state agencies for their review and approval.
- The state agencies jointly review recommendations, make changes as needed, approve new policy/procedures, and inform workgroup.
- Department of Education and Lead Agency give a clear message about their philosophy and values regarding evaluation and assessment, and provide clear directives about the new policies/procedures and the purpose of the guidance document and how it is to be used.

Estimated Date/Duration: March – April 2006

Target Audience: State staff representing early intervention and preschool special education, regional and program administrators, service providers, parent organizations, families

System Level(s): State Infrastructure

Evaluation	
Benchmarks	**Data Sources for Evaluating Benchmarks**
◦ Decisions are made regarding aspects of evaluation and assessment and eligibility processes ◦ Decisions are clearly articulated and approved by appropriate parties.	◦ Notes documenting discussions and decisions ◦ Clear, written message from state agencies about their philosophy/values and "givens" about state decisions regarding evaluation/assessment/eligibility determination

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